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Statement

by

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at

REGIONAL CONSULTATION

**“Inclusive and Sustainable Development: Perspectives from Europe
and Central Asia on the Post-2015 Development Agenda”**

Opening

Istanbul, Turkey, 7 November 2013

Your Excellency Minister Yilmaz,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank the Government of Turkey for hosting this important event in the vibrant and beautiful city of Istanbul. It is a very timely opportunity for us to come together and discuss our idea of development after the MDGs. I also thank our partners from the regional UN System for the constructive cooperation in preparing this meeting.

Europe and Central Asia, as a region, has a lot to contribute to the debate on what a new development framework should look like. As Ms. Sultanoglu, the Chair of the regional UN Development Group, has pointed out, the region is already playing an important role in the ongoing process of shaping the post-2015 agenda, for instance through numerous national consultations and participation in global discussions. It is important that we continue to make the voice of this region heard and share its experiences and lessons. The Regional Consultation today and tomorrow is an excellent opportunity to formulate our priorities and forge discussions among a multitude of stakeholders.

Europe and Central Asia is prepared to make a distinct and thoughtful contribution to the new development agenda, supported by the UN System. During this year, about a dozen UN entities in the region pooled their expertise and formulated a regional post-2015 vision entitled "Building more inclusive, sustainable and prosperous societies in Europe and Central Asia". The publication, a copy of which you have received, may serve as a reference for discussions at this meeting and beyond. We worked together across various areas, because we see the development of a new agenda as a valuable opportunity to learn from and go beyond the MDGs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UNECE region is diverse and unique. It includes high-, middle- and low-income countries in Europe, North America and Central Asia. The eastern part of the region has had a particular history with two decades of socioeconomic and political reforms. At the same time, despite this diversity, there is also a great deal of commonalities between the different countries.

All countries in this region face similar challenges in building more inclusive, more sustainable and more prosperous societies. These challenges certainly differ in terms of magnitude and sub-regional, national and local circumstances, as well as the specific policies needed to address them. But they fall in similar categories throughout the region. On this basis, we have derived three key messages in our regional report, which I would briefly like to highlight.

Firstly, a key challenge is ensuring inclusion and reducing all forms of inequalities. This also applies to the advanced economies, in which most people enjoy decent living standards. But even here, national averages mask serious inequalities. We are experiencing rising gaps between the wealthiest and the poorest in many countries throughout the region. Marginalized groups such as migrants, refugees, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and residents of rural areas are lagging behind. The global financial and economic crisis has adversely affected many key areas, such as employment, health, and education.

In order to address inequalities, it is necessary to create decent jobs, invest in quality health and education services, strengthen social protection, and tackle gender-based discrimination.

Secondly, many countries are also struggling to reconcile economic and social development with environmental sustainability. It is apparent that the conventional development model with growth at its centre is not suited to resolve today's challenges. Therefore, it is crucial to emphasize sustainable development and place it at the centre of development efforts. For the high-income countries, the task is to significantly reduce

their ecological footprint and the emission of pollutants and greenhouse gases, and to change production and consumption patterns. Many middle-income countries need to improve their resource efficiency. The challenge for low-income countries is to find dynamic economic and social development paths that respect ecological boundaries.

The transformation to a green economy is a major task in this regard. It requires a country-specific policy mix that may include investments in science, technology, innovation and education. A number of countries in this region are implementing policies to advance this transformation, and I believe that this region could take a leading role in creating green economies.

Last but not least, the challenges we are facing require new approaches in the way we develop and implement policies, work with partners and engage stakeholders. No single institution, government ministry, or sectoral policy can resolve today's increasingly complex issues. Cross-sectoral cooperation is essential, particularly at the national and local levels.

Enhancing the voice and participation of the society as a whole is also crucial in moving towards more inclusive and sustainable societies. This includes forging stronger partnerships with civil society and the private sector. The active role of civil society at this meeting is one example of the significant contribution it can make.

Moreover, international cooperation at the regional and global level will be vital. UNECE is working to further develop regional cooperation on sustainable development issues, including through the exchange of policy experiences, implementation of legal instruments, and capacity-building.

The UNECE region will also continue to play a vital role within a renewed global partnership for development. Twenty-three of the 27 'traditional' donor members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) are in the UNECE region, which at the same time is home to some of the world's most important emerging donors, including Kazakhstan, Poland, the Russian Federation and certainly Turkey. Official Development

Assistance (ODA) remains important, especially for low-income countries. Yet it is also clear that the key to resolving today's challenges is not merely the amount of ODA transferred, but rather the quality and inclusiveness of solutions offered, the relevance of knowledge that is transferred and the breadth and depth of the partnerships forged. This region can help to develop some of these new alliances and modalities in a dynamic development cooperation landscape.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These are core priorities for a future development agenda for many countries in our region. I firmly believe that they also resonate at the global level. These priorities can be integrated in a truly global framework with responsibilities for all countries, regardless of their development level. I am convinced that such a universal agenda would be to the benefit of all countries.

Much of the debate on the post-2015 framework is focussed on pressing global challenges. However, let us not forget: there are also considerable opportunities. A well-designed development agenda could be a forceful contribution to strengthen equality, sustainability and inclusion on the international agenda and achieve real change in this direction. After the Great Recession, we need nothing less than a Great Transformation to ensure the future of the planet and its people. Europe and Central Asia are well placed to spearhead this transformation

I thank you for your attention.
